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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [KDEM](#) [AG](#)
SUBJECT: SENATE PRESIDENT RE-ELECTED

REF: A. 2006 ALGIERS 2067

[1](#)B. ALGIERS 30

Classified By: DCM Thomas F. Daughton; reasons 1.4 b/d

[1](#)1. (C) Abdelkader Bensalah was re-elected, 129-0, as the President of the Conseil de la Nation (Senate) on January 12. Bensalah remains first in line to succeed President Bouteflika in the event that he is unable to complete his current term. Bensalah's re-election became a foregone conclusion when no other senator challenged him for the post. A reporter for French-language daily newspaper Liberte, XXXXXXXXXXXX, who covered all aspects of the election, told us the result was predetermined once President Bouteflika signaled to the senators that he wanted Bensalah to retain his position. XXXXXXXXXXXX said senators privately complained that, out of respect to Bouteflika, no other candidates had presented themselves. Many told her the election became a formality rather than an exercise in democracy, which was a shame in their view.

BOUTEFLIKA APPOINTS SENATORS OF HIS GENERATION

[1](#)2. (C) On the day of the election, eight new senators joined the Conseil de la Nation as part of the third of the membership appointed directly by President Bouteflika (ref A). All have one characteristic in common: they are "moudjahidine," or veterans (like Bouteflika) of the war of independence against France. According to XXXXXXXXXXXX, these newly appointed senators, as members of the "revolutionary family" and in a sense "siblings of President Bouteflika," will be very loyal to him. Some senators quietly expressed to her their frustration that the president did not reach out to members of the younger generation who will need to lead the country after Bouteflika and his generation pass from the scene.

VACANT SEATS FOR DEPARTING MINISTERS?

[1](#)3. (C) Bouteflika appointed just eight senators out of the 24 allotted to him this year. XXXXXXXXXXXX, a former senator from the presidential tier, told us Bouteflika made a conscious decision to leave 16 seats vacant for later appointment. While it may be true that Bouteflika had not yet made up his mind in some cases, XXXXXXXXXXXX thought it more likely that he wanted to keep some Senate seats in reserve for ministers who are expected to be dismissed shortly from the cabinet. XXXXXXXXXXXX said the number of vacant seats was a good indicator that a cabinet shuffle was coming soon.

[1](#)4. (C) COMMENT: Even though Bouteflika's illness is receding in the minds of the public (thanks to television pictures of an active president), the widely respected Bensalah is considered able to manage the presidential succession process should Bouteflika not be able to finish his term. XXXXXXXXXXXX analysis of the vacant Senate seats also strikes us as on the mark.
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